

EPA Region 7 EJ FORUM

August 10, 2000 ■ Jack Reardon Civic Center ■ 1:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.



Event Synopsis

The EJ Forum was presented by the Environmental Protection Agency Region 7, Environmental Justice Program.

PURPOSE & OUTCOMES

The purpose of the Environmental Justice (EJ) Forum was to allow the EPA an opportunity to assert its belief that partnerships between stakeholder groups is vital in the pursuit of environmental justice.

The Forum is a result from two meetings held in May 2000, involving two different stakeholder groups: 1) community environmental health organizations', and 2) federal agencies with EJ responsibility, and their request to continue to engage in dialogue.

The goal of the Forum was to bring together various regional stakeholders, policy and decision-makers, and community members to learn about environmental justice and to build partnerships.

During the seven-hour day we were able to see that it was central that partnerships arise. Partnerships are necessary in the form of community planning, decision-making, enacting laws, zoning, permitting, evoking meaningful involvement, and many other aspects as well. We were also able to see where the gaps were. Corporate representation was lacking participation and there are barriers that still tend to exist.

APPROACH

The EJ Forum was designed to produce active dialogue among the panelists and audience members. Each panel was moderated and facilitated with discussion questions during each session. Each panel was opened for discussion, once introductions were held, and audience members were able to freely communicate their needs, ideas, and questions.



The meeting was organized with the community attendee's in mind. The event was scheduled from 1:00 - 8:00 p.m. to allow working individuals the opportunity to attend the event both during and after regular work hours. Sessions were geared toward specific topics to generate the most dialogue and effective communication.

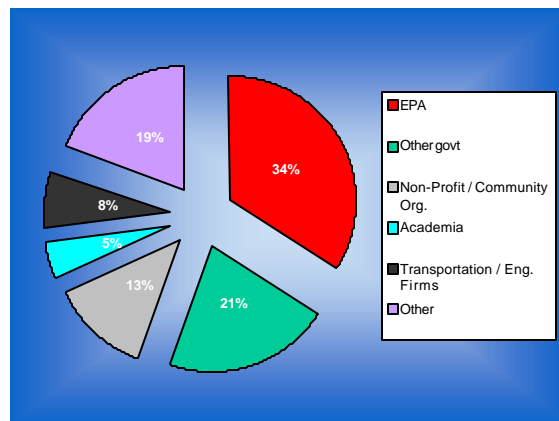
ATTENDANCE

Over 200 participants attended the EJ Forum held on August 10, 2000 at the Jack Reardon Civic Center in Kansas City, Kansas.



Among the stakeholders in attendance at the forum included: federal, state, and local governments; non-profit organizations; environmental grassroots organizations; academia; tribal groups; transportation associations; and engineering firms.

The Forum also included displays by current and past EPA EJ grant recipients and EPA programs. Exhibits included: Metropolitan Energy Center, Operation SafeStreet, Nebraska Recycling Center, Bridging the Gap, the Wyman Center, Inc., LeadBusters, and EPA's Environmental Justice Program, Brownfields Program, and the Toxic Substances and Control Act Program.



Co-sponsors of the event included: The Department of Housing and Urban Development, Mid-America Regional Council, and Bridging The Gap.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Keynote Address: Grover Glenn Hankins, Esq.

The Forum's keynote address was given by professor Grover Glenn Hankins of Thurgood Marshall's School of Law, Environmental Justice Clinic at Texas Southern University. Professor Hankins addressed the audience with fond memories of working in Kansas City with the Quindaro neighborhood,



and working towards achieving environmental justice.

Mr. Hankins applied his experience and knowledge of environmental justice and the law as he referenced cases that were pinnacle in his career and work towards achieving environmental justice.

Session 1: **Community Empowerment**

Session 1 consisted of a panel discussion regarding Community Empowerment and the role Environmental Justice plays. The panel consisted of Malcolm Barnett, HUD; Farella Robinson, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights; and Dan Wildcat, Haskell Indian Nations University.

This session focused on how the community can become an active player in addressing environmental justice issues around them.



Session 2: **Health & Environment**

Session 2 consisted of two separate break-out sessions: "Health and Environment" and "Recognizing EJ When You See It". The Health and Environment session featured a panel of field experts including, Dr. E. Frank Ellis, Department of Health and Human Services; Gabriella Kusko, Children's Mercy Hospital; Charles Lee, EPA HQ, Environmental Justice Program; Sam Umscheid, Unified Government of KCK, Wyandotte County; and John Villanueva, Cabot Westside Clinic.

A highlight of this session was a presentation by Sam Umscheid on the hidden dangers of household hazardous chemicals. Mr. Umscheid made us aware of the chemicals we use on a daily basis and safer alternatives.

Recognizing EJ When You See It

Reginald Harris, EJ Coordinator, EPA Region 3, Philadelphia, gave a presentation on the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to recognize areas where environmental injustices occur. Mr. Harris spoke of zoning and permitting processes that often play key roles in EJ areas and how these areas then become negatively affected. An important aspect of Mr. Harris's discussion was that the data layer required for EJ analysis is sometimes dependant on census data from 10 years ago. Current data is needed to provide a more accurate depiction of today's EJ situation.

Session 3: **Effective Public Participation**

The final session of the day ended with a town hall styled meeting to discuss various EJ-related issues as seen from the community, government, and academic perspectives. Panelists for this session included: Flora Buford, East Meyer Neighborhood Association; Loretta Columbel, Liveable Neighborhoods Task Force; Dr. Emil Jason, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville; Charles Lee, EPA HQ, Office of Environmental Justice; and Marlene Nagel, Mid-America Regional Council.

Discussions arose from topics such as "How do we effectively engage in meaningful public participation?" and "How do we evoke leadership within a group?"

Flora Buford responded by noting that leadership within a group may arise out of the most unsuspecting, but committed member. Leadership for a group may live only in the moment of a particular issue, and leadership of a group may come out of the person who is the most committed to the cause or mission.



Loretta Columbel of the Liveable Neighborhoods Task Force spoke about the meaningfulness and effectiveness of public participation. Effective public participation must occur on the people's time, around their schedule, and relating to their wants and needs.

She noted an experience she encountered in holding public meetings. People were more apt to attend the meeting at night and in safe, easy accessible places around the neighborhood. This type of attention is what is meaningful to the people, this is what will engage them in discussion, and this is what will enable them to actively participate.